

A QUESTION FOR COMMUNICANTS

NO. 2268

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 1, 1890

What mean ye by this service?"

Exodus 12:26

IN a spiritual religion, everything must be understood. That which is not spiritual, but ritualistic, contents itself with the outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation, there was a very strong tendency in that direction, but it was kept to some extent. Under the Christian faith, this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We must know the meaning of what we do, otherwise we are not profited.

We do not believe in the faith of the man who was asked what he believed, and replied that he believed what the church believed. "But what does the church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "Well, but what do you and the church believe?" "We both of us believe the same thing." He could not be got to explain himself any further. We look upon such expressions as the talk of ignorance, and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes, and can give a reason for the hope that is in her meekness and fear.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, "What mean ye by this service?" Children should be encouraged now to ask such gracious questions. I am afraid they are not prompted to do so as they used to be in Puritan times. After the sermon always came the catechizing of the children when they were at home, and every father was bound to be attentive, because he had to ask the boys and girls in the evening what they had heard and they were more attentive then than now, because they had to be prepared to answer and to ask any questions of their parents in return. Cultivate in your children a desire to understand everything connected with our holy faith.

In this chapter, from which I have culled my text, the parents are taught how to answer their children. If the parent be ignorant, a question from his child is inconvenient. He finds his ignorance exposed, and he perhaps is vexed with the child who has been the innocent means of unveiling him to himself. Be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the Gospel mean. Explain baptism to them, explain the Lord's supper to them, and above all, explain the Gospel, and let them know as far as words can make it plain, what is that great mystery whereby we are saved, whereby sin is forgiven, and we are made the children of God.

I thought it would be profitable, if God gave me strength for the exercise, very briefly to answer the question supposed to be put by an intelligent youth, "What mean ye by this service?"—this service that is called by some people "Holy Communion," which is sometimes called the "Eucharist," and among us is called "the Lord's supper," or "the breaking of bread." What does it mean?

It means many things, but chiefly five, of which I will speak now.

I. This supper is, first of all, A MEMORIAL.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. You may erect a bronze column, or you may engrave a record of it upon brass in the church. The column will get sold for old bronze, and somebody will steal the brasses from the church, and the memorial will disappear. You may write it upon marble if you please, but in our climate, at any rate, the inscription is very apt to be obliterated, and the old stones, though they last long, may after a time be as dumb as the treasures of Nineveh and Egypt were for centuries.

These monuments did preserve the records, but they were hidden under the sand, or buried beneath the ruins of cities, and though they have a tongue now, and are speaking forcibly, yet whatever had been entrusted to them would have been forgotten while they were lying under the sand of the desert, or in the *debris* of the palaces of Koyunjik. There are other ways of preserving memorials, such as writing in books, but books can be lost. Many valuable works of the ancients have entirely ceased, and no copies of them can be found. Some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament, which were not inspired books, but still were books which we should greatly value now, have quite passed out of existence.

It is found that upon the whole, one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it, which shall be frequently performed, so as to keep the fact in memory. I suppose that Absalom will never be forgotten. He built himself a pillar in the king's dale, he knew his own infamous history, and he thought it might be forgotten. No one would care to remember it, so he built himself a monument, and there it stands, or what is reputed to be that monument, to this day, and every Arab who passes by the spot throws a stone at it. Absalom will better be remembered by the ceremony of throwing stones at his tomb than by any record in marble.

To turn your thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a surer and better method of keeping the death of Christ in mind than that of meeting together, as we shall do tonight, for the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of the juice of the vine in memory of His death. Other facts may be forgotten, this one can never be.

Tonight, and every first day of the week, in ten thousand places of worship, believers meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's cross and passion, His precious death and burial. Those great facts can never pass out of mind. Jesus said to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of me." In obeying His command you are doing what is most effectual in keeping your Lord in remembrance.

As I preach, tonight, having no sort of reliance upon my own words, I want you to practice them as I go along, then you will be like the woman who said that when she heard a sermon about light weights and short measures, though she forgot what the preacher said, when she got home, she remembered to burn her bushel, which was too short. So, if you can just practice the sermon as you hear it, it will be well.

Recollect, then, that you come to this table tonight to *remember an absent friend*. Jesus has gone away. He who loved us better than any other ever loved us, has left us for a while. We sometimes take little parting gifts from friends, and they say to us—

*"When this you see,
Remember me."*

Probably, almost everybody here has, at some time or other, had certain tokens of remembrance by which they might be reminded of some dear one who is far away across the seas, out of sight, but not out of mind. You come to the communion table, then, to remember your absent Friend.

You come, also, chiefly to *remember His great deed of love*. This supper is a memorial of what Jesus did for you when He was on the earth. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down His life for you, remember that tonight. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," dwell on that fact.

Let these words wake the echoes in your hearts, "Gethsemane!" "Gabbatha!" "Golgotha!" Can you forget all that Jesus suffered there on your behalf? If you have let these things slip in any degree from your heart's affections, come and write them down again. Come to the table, and here celebrate the memorial of His love, and wounds, and agonies, and death for you.

*"In memory of the Savior's love,
We keep the sacred feast,
Where every humble contrite heart*

Is made a welcome guest.

*“By faith we take the bread of life,
With which our souls are fed;
And cup, in token of His blood
That was for sinners shed.”*

You are also called upon to *remember a dear Friend who*, although He has gone away, *has gone about your business*. It was expedient for you that He should go away. He is doing you more good where He has gone than He could have done if He stayed here. He is pressing on your suit tonight. Your business would miscarry were it not for Him, but within the veil that hides Him from you, He is pleading for you. His power, His dignity, His merit, are all freely being employed for you. He is pleading the causes of your soul. Can you, will you, forget Him? Will you not now forget everything else, and indulge the sweet memory of your faithful Lover, your dear Husband, who is married to you in ties of everlasting wedlock? Come, I pray you, keep the memorial of this dear Friend.

And you have to *remember a Friend who will return very soon*. He only tells you to do this till He comes. He is coming back to us. His own words are, “Behold, I come quickly!” That is not quite the meaning of what He said, it was, “Behold, *I am coming* quickly!” He is on His way, His chariot is hurrying towards us, the axles of the wheels are hot with speed. He is coming as fast as He can.

The long-suffering of God delays Him, till sinners are brought in, till the full number of His elect shall be accomplished, but He is not delaying, He is not lingering, He is not slack, as some men count slackness, He is coming quickly. Will you not remember Him? Soon will His hand be on the door, soon for you, at any rate, He may cry, “Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away,” and soon He may be here among us, and then we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

I charge my own heart to remember my dear Lord tonight, and I pray you, brothers and sisters, let not the feebleness of my reminder deprive you now of the happiness of thinking much of Christ your Lord. Sit you still, and let all other thoughts be gone, and think only of Him who loved you and died for you. Let your thoughts go back to Calvary, as you sing, in mournful accents—

*“O sacred head, once wounded,
With grief and pain weigh’d down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown!*

*“How pale art Thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!”*

Oh, eyes full of tears! Oh, shoulders once beaten with the gory lash! Oh, hands once nailed to the cruel tree! Oh, feet once fastened to the bitter cross! Soon shall we behold the Christ who loved us, and died for us. Wherefore let us observe this sacred feast in remembrance of Him.

II. But I must be briefer on my second point. The second meaning of the Lord’s supper is that it is AN EXHIBITION. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew the Lord’s death till he comes.” We are helped to remember it by the type, the emblem, the metaphor which is supplied to us by this supper. How is that? Is there any likeness to the death of Christ in this supper? I answer, there is a *great* likeness.

There is *His broken body*, represented by the bread which is broken, and intended for use. His dear body was broken, marred, sadly marred, given over to the hands of death, laid in the sepulcher, wrapped

about with fine linen, left there, as His enemies thought, never to rise again. In that broken bread, broken that even believing children may eat their morsel, you see Christ's body given up for His people's sake.

But there stands a cup. It is full of the red juice of the grape. What does it mean? He Himself shall explain it, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Now, *the shedding of blood* is the great token of death. One would not long talk of killing without speaking of blood-shedding, in fact, bloodshed usually means dying by a violent death, and so did He die.

They pierced His hands and His feet, the soldier thrust his lance into His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. That stream of blood was the token that He really was dead. He has poured out from His veins His precious life to purchase His redeemed. The broken bread, the cluster pressed into the cup, and leaving nothing but its blood-red juice, these two things symbolize Christ's death.

But most of all, this is an exhibition of *the two things separate*, the bread and the cup. We have heard of some mixing the bread with the wine, that is not the Lord's supper. We have heard of others partaking of the wafer, as they call it, and leaving the cup, this is not taking the Lord's supper. They must be both there, the bread here, the wine cup there, because the separation of the blood from the flesh is the surest token of death. "The blood is the life thereof," and if the blood be drained away, there is death. Therefore the blood is represented by the cup, and the flesh is represented by the bread, these two separated are the great token and emblem of Christ's death.

We show, display, exhibit, symbolize the death of our Lord at this table in this fashion, we partake of both symbols, eating of the bread, drinking of the cup, *the whole ministering to the support of our life*. At this table we say to all of you who do not know Christ, Christ's death is our life, and the remembrance of Christ's death is the food of our life. If any of you are spectators of the ordinance, this is the meaning of our little acted sermon, Christ has died. Christ's death is the support of our faith, the food of our souls, in token whereof we take this bread and this cup, and eat and drink.

So this supper is a showing forth of Christ's death. How many here can say that Christ's death is their life? How many of you can say that you feed upon Him? Dear Friends, you must not come to the table unless you can say it, but if you can, come and welcome, and if you cannot, oh! may the Lord teach you the lesson that is so needful, the lesson that is so blessed, when it is once learned, that Christ on the cross is the one hope of eternal glory.

You have thus had two meanings of the Lord's supper, first, it is a memorial, and next, an exhibition.

III. The Lord's supper is, next, A COMMUNION.

We must have this brought out prominently, or we shall miss a great deal. *We are at the Lord's table*, we eat of His bread, we drink out of His cup. This betokens friendship. When, in the East, a man has eaten of an Arab's salt, he is henceforth under his protecting care, and he who has spiritually eaten of Christ's bread has come under Christ's protection, Christ will take care of Him. All feuds are ended, an eternal peace is established between the two.

It was a tender parable in which Nathan spoke of a man who had a little ewe lamb, which did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom. This is your privilege, to lie in Christ's bosom, to drink out of His cup, and to eat of His bread. This is a very sweet fellowship, enjoy it tonight to the full.

We go further than that, for we not only eat of His bread, but symbolically *we feast upon Him*. His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. Can I really feed upon Christ? Really, yes. Carnally, no. There is no such thing as the carnal eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood, that were a horrible thing, that were to make a man a cannibal, but the spiritual feeding upon the Incarnate God, this is what we mean.

He gives us His flesh to eat, and we thus enter into a fellowship of the most intense and mysterious kind, not merely eating with Him, but eating Him, not merely receiving from Him, but receiving Him Himself to be the life of our hearts. May you get to that point tonight! I believe in the real presence of Christ, I do not believe in the carnal presence of the Romanist. I believe in the real presence of the believer, but that reality is none the less real because it is spiritual, and only spiritual men can discern it.

Now, beloved, if we really come in the right spirit to this table, when we have eaten the bread, it becomes part of us, when the wine is sipped, the juice of the grape enters into our constitution, we cannot separate it from ourselves. Such is our fellowship with Christ. *He is one with us, and we are one with Him.* “*Quis separabit?*” “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” We are one with Christ, partners with Him, all that He has is ours, all that we have is His. He gives Himself to us, we yield ourselves to Him. It is Christ and Co., only the little “Co.” drops its name to be swallowed up in Him who is all in all. That is the meaning of the bread and the cup. We take Christ into ourselves, as He has taken us up into His greater self.

But communion also means that *we are one with each other*. I wish that you would catch that thought. I am afraid there are some members of the church here, who have never realized their union with all the rest of the members. “We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. There should be an intimate feeling of fellowship, a readiness to help and love one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

I cannot shake off from myself the idea that this makes up a large part of the meaning of the Lord’s supper, the communion of saints with each other as well as the communion of the saints with Christ. May we enjoy it tonight! For my part, I like to feel, when I come to the table, that I am going to have communion, not only with this church, large as it is, not merely with the members of one denomination (I wish there were no denominations), not merely with the company of one body of Christians—would to God, there were but one body of Christians throughout the world!—but freely inviting all who belong to any part of the visible church,

I delight to think that at this table tonight I shall have fellowship with the brethren on the Congo, with the brethren in India, with the brethren in the United States, of all names, and sorts, and ages, and ranks. There cannot be two churches of Christ. There is but one church, one Head and one body. Though there are some very naughty children in the Lord’s family, they must not be kept without their supper, there is some other way of chastening them, and as long as there is true living communion between one Christian and another, where God has given the thing signified, I dare not keep back the sign. If He gives them to have fellowship with Christ, who am I that shall say, “Thou shalt have no fellowship with me”? I dare not say it.

The meaning of this supper, then, is communion.

IV. But a fourth meaning of the Lord’s supper is A COVENANTING.

Our Lord said to His disciples, “This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood.” We do well to sing—

*“Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember Thee.”*

When we come to the Lord’s table, we must be careful that we there *take Christ to be our God in covenant*. We take the one living God forever and ever. He gives Himself to us, and we take Him, and we declare, “This God is our God for ever and ever, He shall be our Guide even unto death.” Do you understand that covenant relationship, every one of you? Do you know what you are doing when you take the piece of bread, and eat it, and take the cup, and drink of it? If you are truly a believer in Christ, God is in covenant with you through the body and the blood of Christ, and you recognize that blessed truth, and take Him to be your God.

Now, the covenant runs thus, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” When, therefore, we come to this covenanting table, we *agree that we will be the Lord’s people*, henceforth, not the devil’s, not the world’s, not our own, but the Lord’s. When the Lord’s people are chastened, we expect

to be chastened with them. When the Lord's people are persecuted, we expect to be persecuted with them. We must take them for better or for worse, to have and to hold, and death itself must not part us from the Lord's people. That is the meaning of coming to this table, recognizing that between you and God there is an agreement made that must not be broken, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, by which God becomes yours and you become His, so that you are forever to be one of those that belong wholly to Him.

Here, at the communion table, God, the covenant God, *seals His love to us*. "Come hither, my child," saith the Lord, "I love thee, and I gave Myself for thee, in token whereof put this bread into thy mouth, to remind thee of how I gave Myself for thee. I love you, so that you are Mine. I have called you by My name, in token whereof I remind you that I bought you with My precious blood. Therefore, let that sip of the juice of the vine go into your body to remind you that by My precious blood, which was shed for many, I have redeemed you from going down into the pit." There are seals at that table, new seals of the covenant, new tokens, new love gifts from the Lord, to remind you of what He has done for you.

And you are to come here tonight, *to testify anew your love to God*. Here you say, "My Master, let me eat with thee!" My Lord, tarry with me! Let me sit at the table with Thee." If any of you have lost your first love, and have grown spiritually cold, the Savior stands at the door, and knocks, and He says, "Open to me," and He also says that if we open to Him, He will come in, and sup with us, and we with Him.

He said that to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, the church which was neither cold nor hot, which He threatened to spew out of His mouth. If you are only fit to make Christ sick, yet if you will open the door to Him, He will come and feast with you tonight, and all shall be well with you. He testifies His love to you. Come and testify yours to Him tonight. That is the meaning of this bread and this cup. Your covenant with death is broken, your agreement with hell is disannulled, and now you are in covenant with God, and He is in covenant with you, even in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken.

V. Lastly, and very briefly, this supper signifies A THANKSGIVING.

It is often called, by friends who love hard words, the "Eucharist." We have some friends who always carry a gold pencil, on purpose to put down every word that nobody understands, that they may use it next Sunday in their sermon. Such people call the Lord's supper the "Eucharist," which signifies "the giving of thanks." This is the thanksgiving service of the church of God. It ought to be celebrated *every* Lord's-day. Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and we ought to give thanks every time we celebrate His resurrection. Certainly we should do so when we celebrate His death. What are we going to do tonight by way of thanksgiving?

Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral. The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's supper takes its place with higher joys, we come to this feast to *testify our joy in Christ*. There is bread, but there is also wine upon the table. This is to show that it is a festival for joy and delight, and you cannot praise Christ better, and give thanks to Him better than by rejoicing in Him. Praise Him by your grateful joy.

I think that we should always come to the Lord's table with a feeling of deep reverence, but that reverence should never tend to bondage. We want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no, come, you children, come, you beloved ones of the Lord! Come, you table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival He has prepared, and let your joy be full of thanksgiving!

We come to the table, next, actually to *praise the Lord for giving Christ to us*. When our Lord broke the bread, He gave thanks, when He passed the cup, He gave thanks. Again and again He gave thanks, so shall we tonight. Come you, beloved, thankfully to praise the Father for the gift of Christ, and as you take the bread into your mouth, say in your heart, "Bless the Lord!" and as you drink of the cup, say in your spirit, "Blessed be His holy name! Blessed be the Father, for His eternal love to us, blessed be

Jesus, for His love which has saved us from death, and blessed be the Holy Spirit, who has taught us to know all these precious things!”

One way in which we show our thanks to Christ is that *we receive with gratitude the emblems of His death*. Each one who communes with us will receive the bread, and eat it, and take the cup, and drink it. We do not hold it up, and look at it, we do not kneel down, and pay it homage, we receive it. We have done so now these many years.

How long is it since we began this holy feast? Well, with some of us, it is over forty years since our first communion, and we do not want any better food. We desire to keep in memory the same Christ, to feed upon the same doctrine of the incarnation and atoning sacrifice, and if we should be spared, beloved, another forty years, which is far from likely, we shall have a sweeter tooth for Christ even than we have now. He will be more dear to us, more precious, more delightful, even than He is to-night. So we come to the table to show our gratitude by receiving and receiving again.

Let me whisper in your ear, when this communion is over, and you shall leave this table, “Pray, beloved, that you may *go away in the same spirit as your Lord and Master did*, when, after rising from supper, He went out to the garden, not there to have a sweet hour of lonely communion with God, but there to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He went there to be arrested, to be hurried off to the bar of Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, and the rest of them. He went there, in fact, to die, but He went away singing.” So I want you to go away from this communion singing praises to God.

As my dear brother said in prayer, you must have your Gethsemanes, your Golgothas, but I want you to go away from this table singing. Whatever comes, high or low, bright or dark, heaven or another age in this dark wilderness, brethren, let us sing. We often say, “Let us pray,” but tonight, at the table, I say, “Let us sing.” Let us sing unto the Lord because of His great gift to us, which we tonight remember, and set forth, and commune with, and covenant with. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live, for we can never sufficiently praise Him for all that He has done for us.

*“We’ll praise our risen Lord,
While at His feast we sit,
His griefs a hallow’d theme afford
For sweetest music fit.”*

Thus I have explained all about the Lord’s supper, do you know anything about it? Some of you are going away. You are going away! Yes, and the day shall come when you will not have anywhere to go! When the great marriage supper is spread, and the feast of the gracious shall be held, and the whole universe shall be gathered, oh! where will you go? You will not be allowed to linger at the door, neither will you go home to wait till others shall return from the festival.

You must be driven from God’s presence if you come not by faith in Christ to that great feast. The fiery swords of the angel guards shall be unsheathed, and they shall pursue you through the blackness of eternal darkness, down to infinite despair! The Lord have mercy upon you tonight, that He may have mercy upon you in that day, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 26:26-30 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-34

We will read, first, Matthew’s account of the institution of the Lord’s supper.

Matthew Chapter 26. Verse 26. *And as they were eating,—*

In the middle of the Paschal Feast our Lord instituted the sacred festival which was always afterwards to be known as “the Lord’s supper.” The one ordinance was made to melt gradually into the other, “as they were eating.”

26. *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

“This represents my body.” He could not possibly have meant that the bread was His body, for there was His body sitting at the table, whole and entire. They would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood Him literally, but they did not do so, any more than when Christ said, “I am the door,” or “I am the Good Shepherd.”

27. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

“Every one of you.” Was this the Lord’s supper? Yes. What say the Romanists about it? Why, that the people may not drink the cup! Yet our Savior said to His disciples, “Drink ye all of it.”

28. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

They had had sin brought to their minds, they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin, now they were to have a perpetual pledge of the pardon of sin, in the cup, which was the emblem of Christ’s blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins.”

29. *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.*

Jesus took the Nazarite vow to drink no more, to partake no more of the fruit of the vine, till He should meet us again in His Father’s kingdom. He has pledged us once for all in that cup, and now He abstains until He meets us again. Thus He looks forward to a glorious meeting, but He bids us take of the cup, and thus remember Him until He comes.

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

To His last great battle the Champion goes singing, attended by feeble followers, who could not protect Him, but who could sing with Him. I think He must have led the tune, His disciples were too sorrowful to sing until His clear voice started the Hallelujah Psalms, but they joined Him in the holy exercise, for “they” as well as their Lord sang the hymn. When you are about to face a trial, offer a prayer, but if you can, also sing a hymn. It will show great faith if, before you enter into the burning fiery furnace, you can sing psalms unto the Lord who redeemeth His people.

Now let us read Paul’s version of this same matter.

1 Corinthians Chapter 11. Verse 20-21. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

These Corinthians had fallen into a queer state. I do not think that any Baptist church that I have ever known of has acted in this fashion, but when churches have no ministers, when there is an open ministry where everybody talks and nobody listens, they fall into a strange condition, especially into divisions and heart-breaking strifes. It was so in the case of this church at Corinth. Here everybody brought his own provision, and some ate to the full, while others had not enough, and they thought that they were observing “the Lord’s supper.”

22. *What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?*

There is your proper place if you want a meal. Go home, and eat and drink, do not come to the sanctuary for such a purpose, “Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?”

22-23. *Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,—*

He had received it by a special revelation. Poor Paul was brought in late, and he was like one born out of due time. He had not been present in the upper room with Christ at the first famous breaking of

bread, so the Lord came and gave Him a special revelation concerning this sacred feast, so that, whenever he spoke or wrote to any of the churches about the Lord's supper, he could say, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

23-24. *That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

The Lord's supper is a simple service of remembrance. Nothing is said about an altar, or a priest, or a sacrifice. Our Lord took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Mark that, "*this* do," it will not be right to do something else instead of this, and we must not do this for any other purpose than the one He mentions, "This do in remembrance of me." This command raises a previous question, "Do we know Him?" We cannot remember Christ if we do not know Him.

25-26. *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

*"By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,
We keep the memory adored,
And show the death of our dear Lord,
Until He come!"*

*"And thus that dark betrayal-night,
With the last advent we unite;
By one blest chain of loving rite
Until He come!"*

27. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*

If such a man has treated "this bread" and "this cup" with contempt, he has treated "the body and blood of the Lord" with contempt, it shall be so reckoned to him. Many have been troubled by this verse. They have said, "We are unworthy." You are, this is quite true, but the text does not say anything about your being unworthy. Paul uses an adverb, not an adjective. His words are, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily," that is, in an unfit way, to gain something by it, as men used to take what they called "the sacrament" to get into certain offices, or as some come to the communion table for the sake of the charitable gifts that are for the poor of the church, this is to eat and drink "unworthily." To come carelessly, to come contemptuously, to say, "I do not care whether I am a Christian, or not, but I shall come to the communion," this is to eat and drink "unworthily." Notice the *ly*, we are all unworthy of this sacred feast, and if unworthiness could shut us out, who would dare to be here?

28. *But let a man examine himself,—*

Let him look himself up and down, as a lawyer cross-questions a witness, as a man examines money to see whether it has the true ring of gold about it, or not, "Let a man examine himself."

28. *And so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

Let him come as a true believer, as sincere, if not perfect, yet true, if not all he ought to be, yet in Christ, if not all he wants to be, yet still on the way to it, by being in Christ, who is "the way, the truth and the life."

29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

He does not see the meaning of the emblems of Christ's death. He degrades the symbol by making it take the place of the thing signified. He sees the bread, but not the body, and he damnifies himself, condemns himself, by such eating. He is a loser rather than a gainer by eating and drinking unworthily.

30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

Persons coming to the Lord's table in an improper spirit are very apt to come under God's discipline, some will be taken ill, and some will die. This discipline is being carried on in every true church of God. God's providence will work in this way if many treat the table of the Lord as the Corinthians did, acting as if it were a common place for eating and drinking. Many of them were weak and sickly, and many died.

31. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

If we are God's people, we shall be judged by Him here for our wrong doing. We shall not be like the world that is left to the day of judgment, but we shall be judged now. God will visit with temporal judgments those of His children who sin against Him.

32. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*

You know that a man will see a great deal that is wrong in children in the street, and say nothing about it, but if it is his own boy who is up to mischief, he will give him a sweet taste of the rod. So, if you belong to God, you cannot sin deeply without having a present judgment, a present discipline, and you ought to be thankful for it, painful though it may seem to be for the time, for "when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

33. *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry for one another.*

How gently Paul talks to these Corinthians! They deserve to be scolded, but he is very tender with them. He says, "If you must come together in this way, at least have the good manners to stop for one another, and if you do come to the communion of the Lord, treat it with that respect and reverence which it deserves."

34. *And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

May we, tonight, keep this feast in due order under the power of the Holy Spirit, and may we find a blessing in it to God's praise! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—938, 947

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